

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Extension Service

THE PARTICIPATION OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN A
NUTRITION PROGRAM 1/

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The real objectives of nutrition education is to bring about the consumption of an adequate diet. Some of the efforts to bring this about are concerned with teaching people about food values in relation to body needs. This type of education is carried on at different levels—elementary for children and most adults; more advanced for others with a basic understanding; and highly technical for nutritionists, physicians, and those who in turn are to teach others.

Another approach to the objective is indirect. It aims to improve food consumption by attacking some of the basic reasons for poor diets. All the knowledge in the world will not result in an adequate diet if there isn't enough money for food, or if the needed foods are not available, or if people are not motivated to apply their knowledge.

An understanding of these facts helps to explain why, in the broadest sense, many activities of the Federal Government have some relation to nutrition, directly or indirectly. For example, some agencies compile statistical data on the production and distribution of the food supply; on prices of food and other goods and services that go to make up the cost of living.

Some agencies are concerned with policies or programs affecting the economic security of certain groups in the population, an important factor in relation to quality of diet. Others have responsibility for maintaining a safe and wholesome food supply. The Departments of the Army and Navy make every effort to provide nutritionally adequate rations for their personnel. This in itself offers an experience in nutrition education for many persons.

Many more examples could be cited to show how the problems of achieving a well-fed population penetrate into related areas of work. However, throughout the rest of this chapter, discussion will focus on the programs of those agencies most closely allied with the educational aspects of nutrition.

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2/ This Committee is composed of representatives of the following agencies: In the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, the Cooperative Extension Service, the Farmers' Home Administration, and the Food Distribution Programs Branch of the Production and Marketing Administration; in the Federal Security Agency, the Children's Bureau, the Office of Education, and the Public Health Service; and the American National Red Cross.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nutrition begins with food, the production and distribution of which is the major concern of the Department of Agriculture. A broad research program provides facts for improved technology in producing, processing, and marketing foods. Included in this research are many lines of investigation bearing on foods and human nutrition.

Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics

The Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics conducts research on the composition and utilization of foods, including preparation and preservation, and on human nutritional requirements. Among current investigations are those being made cooperatively with State experiment stations and health departments in 3 regions, in which the nutritional status of individuals is being studied in relation to food intake. Some of these studies include physical examinations, biochemical measurements and a record of food consumption. In others, human requirements are studied under conditions of controlled food intake. In addition, economic studies are made periodically which show how families spend their incomes and what kind of a living they obtain. Studies of family diets provide information on the kinds and quantities of foods families in different population groups consume, and on the nutritive value of their diets.

Many of these studies have included Negro families in the proportions in which they occur in samples of the population. Data are sometimes, but not always, tabulated separately, depending on the objectives of the study.

Results of dietary studies point the way for the development and content of programs to improve nutrition. They show the effect of various factors such as income, family size, season, region, and for farm families, tenure and extent of home food production, on the nutritional quality of family diets. They show where economic help is needed and where emphasis might be placed in educational efforts.

The Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics not only conducts research but makes recommendations for the practical application of these findings by consumers. It develops materials for use in nutrition education and makes them available to interested agencies and to the public generally. Although it has no field staff working on the community level, it provides subject matter and so makes an important contribution to nutrition education activities of other agencies.

Cooperative Extension Service

The Cooperative Extension Service is the educational arm of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the State land-grant colleges. It teaches farming and homemaking to rural people, men, women and youth—a practical out-of-school

kind of teaching which applies science to real-life situations on a learn-to-do-by-doing basis. It is a joint democratic enterprise—farm people in partnership with their county, State, and Federal governments. Its policies, its financial support, its program execution, its leadership are completely cooperative.

The nutrition program is only one phase of a homemaking and agricultural program. Its educational goal is "well-fed and nutritionally fit people." The goal is reached by bringing to people research findings and new knowledges as they are developed in this field. The nutrition program is interlocked with home food supply, especially poultry, gardening, and dairying. The "know-how" of preparing good food, serving it attractively, food preservation by canning and freezing; child feeding, food selection based on nutrition guides and money income are all phases of the program. Programs are arrived at cooperatively by lay people and Extension Service staff. People express their needs and wants. According to local situations the programs may vary from year to year, stressing milk, eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, preparation of meats, or planning the family food supply. Canning for a year-round supply is always a major phase.

In some southern States, tenant-landlord programs on an adequate family food supply including year-round gardens have been underway for many years. In this program, the owner sponsors the program and furnishes needed tools, seeds and livestock. He often awards prizes to encourage participation and reports that the improved health and welfare of the tenant families bring big dividends.

"Better Eating, Better Health and Better Living" is a common slogan. One home demonstration agent reports: "To have a well-fed family, every individual needs a certain amount of milk, vegetables, fruits, protein foods and water every day. To get these, it is necessary that our farm women know how to plan meals and know the kind and the amount of various foods required for each meal. Families consider canning as one means of protecting family health. Meetings and demonstrations have been held on planning, preparation, and packing of school lunches."

An account of goals set by Negro families in Florida included the following: "to produce family food supply; improve health of every member of the family; save through food conservation; and prepare nutritious meals."

The Negro population has always had a part in the Extension Service. In fact, a Negro home demonstration agent was employed in Oklahoma in 1912 even before the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 establishing the Cooperative Extension Service. By 1948, 772 State and county Negro agricultural and home demonstration agents were employed in the 17 States that have the largest Negro population.

Of the 532,000 Negro farms in the United States, Extension Service reports show that 335,000 were reached in 1947 through agricultural and home demonstration work. In 1947 there were 5,682 Negro home demonstration agent clubs with 145,031 members. About 24,000 Negro local leaders were trained

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and carried to their neighbors better food production and nutrition practices that they had found useful in their own homes. Enrollment in 4-H clubs totaled 315,032 boys and girls of whom 147,476 were carrying on food projects.

Farmers Home Administration

The program of the Farmers Home Administration illustrates well the indirect kind of nutrition education that begins by tackling the basic economic problems of farm family living. A decent house to live in and a suitably equipped farm, capable of providing a living—these are essential before there can be any talk of improving nutrition.

Loans to make these things possible and to start low-income farm families on the road to self-sufficiency are the core of the Farmers Home Administration program. This organization, established in 1946, merged the Farm Security Administration and the Emergency Crop and Feed Loan Division of the Farm Credit Administration. Both former agencies provided to farmers—Negro and white—unable to obtain it from other sources, needed financing on reasonable terms and conditions. The present Farmers Home Administration continues this function, and makes production loans to individual families to buy livestock, farm and home equipment, seed, fertilizer, and other operating needs; makes direct real-estate loans for the purchase, enlargement or improvement of farms, and assists families to have more security on the land through better tenure arrangements. With most types of loans made by the Farmers Home Administration, on-the-farm guidance is provided where needed in planning and carrying out sound farm and home management methods.

Over-all planning for the home division of this farm-and-home guidance is provided by 85 home economists who work out of the National office and 29 State offices where home problems are most acute. A large percentage of the caseload is located in the 14 southern States where Negro population is heaviest. To meet the special needs of families in this section the agency has employed seven Negro home economists who work as county home supervisors advising directly with the families. One Negro home economist is employed on the National office staff to assist with the planning and training program.

The home economists advise local county supervisors on the major family-living problems of borrowers, such as the home food supply and health measures. They assist in developing and carrying out the program in States where they are assigned and advise the State director concerning important family-living problems. They also work directly with borrower families helping them to analyze and plan individually the family's food needs and with other staff members of the agency, giving on-the-farm guidance and assistance in better methods of production and conservation of food.

When families first come on the program their diets are often very limited. To improve them the agency helps the family plan which vegetables to plant,

helps them to locate a dependable source of seed, shows them how to plant year-round gardens and how to can or store the produce for an all-year food supply. In assisting with food supply and health problems the home economists have found that even the use of the word "nutrition" is a stumbling block with a large percentage of its borrowers, and that the family's background and educational opportunities must always be kept in mind. The families lack many facilities which make for easier house work, but home economists have learned to capitalize on this indirectly. The need to cut wood or haul water has actually been used as one means of spreading the use of the pressure cooker by pointing out that "if you use the pressure cooker it will take less water and fuel."

Problems such as persuading families to use more milk also are tackled in an indirect way. The average person likes milk if it is kept cold; but borrower families seldom have adequate storage facilities when they come on the program. Loans for the purchase of refrigerators or even the old-fashioned icebox have been used to remedy this condition. The agency has learned that often it must teach nutrition through the purchase of necessary equipment and supplies.

In all these programs, the Farmers Home Administration cooperates with all other agencies and organizations to develop and carry out the nutrition program.

Because the program is individually administered, its success can best be shown by citing individual cases. For example, in Arkansas the Reverend Lindsey and his family of nine are now owners of a family-type farm which he bought nine years ago with aid from Farmers Home. At the time of the loan, this Negro family was in debt following 20 years of sharecropping; but today a conservative estimate of their net worth would be \$15,000. Mrs. Lindsey says that the home management supervisor who aided them was one of the principal reasons for their present success. "If a woman will just stick close to her husband, do all the canning she can, keep a year-round garden, and be a clean housekeeper," Mrs. Lindsey says, "then it isn't hard to pay off a debt on a farm."

The Lindseys had forty years in which to repay their loan, but they did it in nine years. So have several hundred other Negro borrowers throughout the South. An estimated 40,000 Negro farmers in the southern States have received operating credit from the Farmers Home Administration according to the last available survey, while 5,700 others have been aided to buy or improve farms of their own.

Food Distribution Programs Branch,
Production and Marketing Administration

(School Lunch and Direct Distribution Divisions)

A school lunch program offers a practical way of achieving the goals of nutrition education. One good school meal a day can do much to improve the

food consumption of children whose home diets are faulty. Important also are the educational aspects of school meals. The day-by-day experience of eating well-planned, well-prepared meals lays the foundation for good food habits which may persist throughout adult life.

The National School Lunch Program is a joint effort of several different agencies—Federal, State, and local. The benefits extend to Negro as well as to white children. The Federal Government through the Food Distribution Programs of the Production and Marketing Administration provides funds for reimbursement for local expenditures for food, purchases food for distribution to schools, sets the minimum food standard for the lunches, and provides information to the States to improve the operation of school lunch programs.

Congress makes an annual appropriation to carry on the program. The funds are apportioned by the U. S. Department of Agriculture among the States according to the number of school-age children, and the per capita income of the State. The law requires that the State match any Federal funds allotted to it, dollar for dollar. This measure will be in effect until 1951, after which the State contribution will be increased.

The State department of education administers the program within the State. It is the agency that handles the disbursement of the Federal funds and is responsible for seeing that the provisions of the National School Lunch Act are carried out by the participating schools.

The local sponsor—a school board or other school officials—is responsible for operating the lunch program in the school. A small sum is charged the children for the lunch if they are able to pay, but the same lunch must be served without discrimination to all children, regardless of their ability to pay.

The National School Lunch Act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to use a part of the funds appropriated to make direct purchase of nutritious foods. These foods are distributed by the States to participating schools for the purpose of contributing nutrients frequently lacking in the usual diets of children. Examples include nonfat dry milk which has proved an important supplement especially in areas where fluid milk supplies are inadequate. Also during both 1946-47 and 1947-48, concentrated orange juice was purchased and distributed to schools in order to increase the vitamin C intake of school children. This year, canned tomato products, cheese, and peanut butter also were distributed.

Many other foods acquired by the Department of Agriculture by special purchase are made available for use in the School Lunch Program. They are given in addition to the cash reimbursement. Schools that are not receiving reimbursement are also eligible for these foods. Approximately 195 million pounds of fruits in dried form, including apples, peaches, prunes, and raisins, were made available under this provision in 1947, as well as fresh green beans, beets, potatoes, and dried eggs.

To promote better management of lunch programs and better nutritive returns for the money spent for food, two graduate home economists have been added to the staff in each of five area offices. They have worked continuously with State agency representatives and members of the Extension and university home economics staffs to develop programs that will help school lunch cooks and managers serve the kind of lunch at low cost that growing children need. Probably the greatest single contribution has been the development of training institutes and workshops for managers and cooks.

About 6.9 million children in 48,000 schools participated in the program in 1948, but this number represents only slightly more than a fifth of the school age population. It is hoped that in due time good school meals can be made available to all children in school.

FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY

Activities in this agency that are directly related to nutrition are concerned especially with the educational and health aspects.

Office of Education

The Office of Education cooperates with State departments of education and other educational agencies and organizations in the development of nutrition education as an integral part of the public school program.

The Division of Vocational Education of the Office of Education operates through field agents and consultants, working chiefly through State departments of education and teacher training institutions, on the various problems relating to nutrition education. These agents in the Home Economics and Agricultural Education Services have worked on nutrition problems with representatives from colleges for Negroes that train teachers of agriculture and home economics. The representatives with whom they work include heads of departments, teacher trainers and itinerant teacher trainers in the fields of agricultural education and home economics education.

The work on nutrition education has included problems involved in providing an adequate food supply for Negro families. Gardening, meat supply, and food preservation have been emphasized. The Negro State representatives in cooperation with staff members of the Office of Education prepared the publication "Negro Farm Families Can Feed Themselves" which was later published by the Office of Education.

The Negro itinerant teacher trainers in agriculture and home economics in each State work directly with home economics and agriculture teachers in local communities. They have used this bulletin in assisting local teachers in their respective States with nutrition programs dealing with production, selection, and conservation of foods.

The agents in home economics and agriculture also work with teacher training personnel in colleges for Negroes and those doing supervision through annual

regional conferences and visits to States. The topics covered in these conferences vary according to the need for help. They are concerned with problems of training teachers and of supervision. For the past 6 years special emphasis has been given to food for the family.

State supervisors of home economics and school lunch supervisors have given emphasis to making school lunch programs educational. In several States they worked with Negro nutrition committees in giving further emphasis to nutrition education. They work with teachers in local communities through individual visits, through publications, and through conferences and workshops. Nutrition is taught in relation to the school lunch program, particularly in the elementary grades.

Personnel in the Division of Elementary Education work with State department of education staff members in conferences and in workshops to assist supervisors and teachers in integrating nutrition education with the elementary program.

Children's Bureau

State health agencies that are providing services to mothers and children recognize that good nutrition is a cornerstone of maternal and child health. The States have been able to do more to improve the nutritional status of mothers and children since 1936 when Congress appropriated funds to carry out the Social Security Act of 1935. This Act placed on the Children's Bureau responsibility for administering Federal grants-in-aid to States to enable them to strengthen and extend their health services to mothers and children.

Federal financial assistance has made it possible for the States to augment local resources for maternal and child health services. Nearly all the physicians, nurses, dentists, and other professional personnel engaged in maternal and child health work deal with nutrition as an integral part of a well-rounded program. To assure that nutrition problems are dealt with adequately, State and local health agencies use some of their Federal grants-in-aid for the employment of nutritionists. According to a recent estimate, approximately 170 nutrition positions have been created in State health departments, as compared with some 10 or 12 before Federal grants had been made available. Federal funds from the Children's Bureau have been used by the States to cover a large part of the cost of giving advanced training in colleges and universities to nutritionists already in the employ of the State agency or to be employed on the completion of their training. Like all other professional workers whose salaries are paid wholly or in part from funds administered by the Children's Bureau, nutritionists must meet the minimum qualifications of training and experience established by the State Merit System. Both white and Negro nutritionists are employed and workers from both races have been the recipients of stipends for graduate study.

The Nutrition Unit of the Children's Bureau gives consultation through the Bureau's regional office to the State health agencies that are carrying

on nutrition service as part of their maternal and child health programs. This Unit also contributes to the general health education activities of the Bureau as described in Chapter XXIII (The Health Education Program of the Children's Bureau).

Public Health Service

Work in the food and nutrition field as it relates to public health is carried on by three groups in the Public Health Service. The Milk and Food Branch of the Sanitary Engineering Division carries on investigations in milk and food sanitation and offers advisory and consultative service to Federal, State and local control officials and to industry. The Shell Fish Sanitation Branch also cooperates with the States and the industry in certification of shell fish sanitation. This Division is also responsible for sanitation on interstate common carriers.

The program of the Nutrition Branch of the Bureau of State Services is designed to assist State and local health departments in the development of nutrition programs, the objective being to improve and maintain the nutritional status of the population by increasing public understanding of the importance of good nutrition to health. A comprehensive program of this type includes (1) investigations and applied research, (2) service, and (3) education. One of the primary functions of the program is to secure information on the prevalence of nutritional deficiency disease and the general nutrition status of the people of the United States. To this end surveys have been made of a number of population groups including urban and rural families (both Negro and white), industrial workers, school children, institutionalized groups, and Indians on reservations. These appraisals consist of a physical examination, laboratory tests and a dietary history. A major activity of the Nutrition Branch is the development of methods for assessing human nutrition that can be adopted by health departments, and to provide a pattern which may be utilized by State and local health agencies to increase the effectiveness of their public health nutrition programs. To this end field investigation and demonstration units, staffed by physicians, biochemists, nutritionists and public health nurses have been assigned to health departments in four areas of the United States. Working with the health and education departments, nutrition education of the field units is planned around the food needs and nutrition problems of the different age levels and other special groups.

At the National Institute of Health of the Public Health Service, studies concerning deficiency diseases are conducted. In the early work of the Institute, Dr. Goldberger demonstrated that pellagra was due to a dietary deficiency. Later studies have dealt with human riboflavin deficiency, anemia and other blood abnormalities. Through a grants-in-aid program financial assistance is given to universities and others for research in the nutrition field.

Results of these studies, like those from other research agencies provide basic information needed for nutrition education. Knowledge of the most frequent occurring nutritional deficiencies, where they occur, and how

they may be corrected or prevented helps to direct emphasis in community programs. (See also Chapter XI, The Incidence of Nutritional Deficiencies Among Negroes.)

AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS Nutrition Service

Nutrition has since 1908 been a part of the Red Cross health education program. The organization with its many departments has offered numerous opportunities for reaching people with practical information on food and nutrition. The Veteran and his family known to the Home Service case workers often have welcomed guidance on stretching their limited pension dollars or in adapting a special diet to family meals. Home Nursing instructors have invited a nutrition instructor to give a food lesson in a standard Home Nursing course. Volunteers, recruited to give canteen service, have learned something of nutrition as they are trained in emergency feeding. Through Junior Red Cross, educational materials can be offered to the schools.

While the educational possibilities within the organization itself have been and are wide, the community nutrition education program has been given special emphasis by the Red Cross. It is Red Cross policy to supplement the nutrition education programs of the official and voluntary health and educational agencies. In some instances, the Red Cross has given support to a demonstration program, perhaps supplying a nutritionist to the local health department, or to some other community agency. In the President's post-war food conservation campaign, popular leaflets such as Food Is Your Business were prepared and distributed widely with the help of Junior Red Cross and many community agencies. While the nutrition workers in chapters were largely volunteer, the Red Cross employed its share of professional nutritionists with about 35 on the national staff from 1942 to 1947, and with 66 chapters having nutrition directors at the close of the fiscal year 1947-48.

The food and nutrition education program has used varying methods, from mass education through radio or newspaper columns to the expensive but effective individual conference method. The Red Cross has, however, perhaps been best known for its food and nutrition classes. This may be because the agency had a long history of health courses in first-aid and home nursing, or because Red Cross was almost the only organization with nation-wide coverage which offered class instruction in the urban areas to anybody who sought instruction, whether of high or low income, and of whatever creed or race. Two official courses were always offered, one twelve-hour, and one of twenty hours. They could be taught only by instructors authorized by the national organization. The shorter course emphasized cookery methods and marketing practices to conserve food values and stretch the food dollar. The twenty-hour standard nutrition course considered nutrition principles as applied to family meals and adapted to incomes, food customs, and local food resources. Another was designed to train school lunch workers where the State adviser and the schools wanted such assistance. In a few instances, the chapter nutritionist has served as the adviser for the school's entire lunch program.

In 1942-43, the peak year of the last war, 221,959 persons completed a Red Cross nutrition course, and over 86,000 volunteers were trained in quantity feeding to give canteen service. In that same year almost 20,000 dietitians and nutritionists, including professionals of every race and creed, taught food classes for the Red Cross. Single talks and demonstrations as well as film showings brought nutrition information to many more. In the six years between 1942 and 1948 a total audience of over three million persons was reported as reached by chapters through other means than classes. This was in addition to the 496,168 persons—homemakers, business girls, men, boys and girls—who completed a food course offered by Red Cross chapters in the United States.

INTERAGENCY NUTRITION PLANNING COMMITTEE

Each of the 8 agencies whose work has just been described has membership in the Interagency Nutrition Planning Committee, a group whose common interest is nutrition education. With the exception of the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics each agency has field staff working on a regional, State, or local basis. Through this committee agencies coordinate their nutrition programs to prevent overlapping and to fill gaps. They also agree upon new programs that they can mutually advance and that State and local nutrition committees can work on to improve nutritional status. Education is most effective when the same point is stressed in many different ways and when different groups working in a community join forces to meet a common objective. Meetings of the committee afford opportunities for the members to discuss problems that are common to all and to work out plans of action. One of the latest of the committee's activities was to sponsor a 3-day Nutrition Institute on March 30, 31, and April 1, 1949, at Washington, D. C.

Secretariat for this committee has been provided by the Nutrition Programs Office, Food Distribution Programs Branch, Production and Marketing Administration, United States Department of Agriculture. This office also maintains contact with State nutrition committees, which were set up during the war as a part of the National Nutrition Program. A large number of these State groups continue to function actively, coordinating and promoting many kinds of nutrition activities within the respective States.

SUMMARY

The foregoing discussion shows clearly that nutrition education is not an entity in itself, carried on as a function of any one agency. It is approached rather through problems related to food, health, and income, with research to point the way and measure progress.
